Minoxidil lotion for hair loss

The aim of this information sheet is to answer some of the questions you may have about minoxidil 5% lotion, and to help you use it to get the maximum benefit from therapy.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist. If you would like further information regarding alternative treatments available to treat your condition, please contact your doctor.

What is minoxidil?
Minoxidil 5% lotion is a medicine which is applied directly to the scalp in order to help stimulate hair growth and reverse the hair loss process. Please note that when hair starts to grow, and how much it grows, can vary amongst patients according to age and the extent of hair loss.

Taking an unlicensed medicine
The minoxidil 5% lotion is manufactured by the St Thomas’ pharmacy department and is therefore unlicensed. Our leaflet, Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients, explains what this means. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively, you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline (contact details are at the end of this leaflet).

How do I apply minoxidil lotion?
- Your hair and scalp should be thoroughly dry before you apply the lotion. Using the dropper provided, apply a thin layer of lotion to the affected areas of the scalp. Do not put too much on and avoid the hair where possible, as the lotion coats the hair in a noticeable white film.
- Do not use cotton wool to apply the lotion as it tends to absorb it, resulting in the lotion having less of an effect. Use your fingertips or the dropper to spread the lotion.
- You should apply the lotion twice a day unless your doctor has told you otherwise. Do not apply the lotion last thing at night and ensure you do not apply too much. If the lotion drips down and has prolonged contact with your face, you could develop facial hair.
- There are no restrictions regarding hair washing and you may wash your hair as usual.
- Please allow the area where you applied the lotion to dry naturally. The lotion is flammable so do not blow dry your hair.

What should I do if I forget to apply it?
It is important to apply the treatment regularly, as directed by your doctor. However, if you forget, wait until your next scheduled application is due and continue as normal.
Are there any side effects?
Common side effects include: unwanted non-scalp hair growth, local redness and itching, dry skin/flaking scalp, changes in hair colour or texture, and headache.

Minoxidil lotion can also aggravate or ‘uncover’ heart disease, such as angina or an irregular heart beat. Please contact your doctor if you currently suffer from high/low blood pressure, angina, an irregular heart beat, or have previously had a heart attack.

You should stop using minoxidil 5% lotion and seek immediate medical advice if you experience any chest pain, tachycardia (faster than normal heart beat), faintness, dizziness, sudden unexplained weight gain, swollen hands or feet, or persistent redness/irritation of your scalp.

Can minoxidil be used during pregnancy or breastfeeding?
There is little information on the safety of minoxidil lotion when used by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. If you are/may be pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding, please let your doctor know.

Is there anything else I need to know?
Minoxidil 5% lotion is flammable and should be kept at or below 25°C. Do not use the lotion whilst smoking, or near any naked flame or strong heat source (such as a hairdryer). Avoid exposure of the container and liquid to naked flames during storage or use. It should be kept out of the reach of children and animals. Return unwanted or expired lotion to your local pharmacy for disposal – do not throw it away or drain it down your sink.

You should not bleach, dye or perm your hair whilst you are being treated with minoxidil lotion.

Minoxidil 5% lotion contains alcohol which may cause burning or irritation. If you get it in your eyes, mouth, into a cut or on damaged skin, wash the areas with plenty of cold water.

The solution of minoxidil may contain a small number of crystals, but the quality and action of the product are not affected by this discoloration. However, if a large number of crystals appear, the product may be less effective and therefore you should contact the pharmacy department (details at the end of the leaflet) for advice or to arrange a further supply.

Where can I get further supplies?
When you are running low and need further supplies of your minoxidil, please contact the Lloyds outpatient pharmacy where your first prescription was dispensed (contact details are at the end of the leaflet). You will need to let them know how many bottles are needed and when you would like to collect them.

Please note that each bottle should last for at least four to six weeks, depending on the size of the area being treated, and it should therefore not be ordered more frequently than this.
Contact us
To re-order further supplies of minoxidil lotion, please contact:

The Lloyds Pharmacy located in the Sainsbury’s shop on Great Maze Pond, Guy’s Hospital
t: 020 7188 7611
Monday to Friday, 8am–11pm; Saturday 9am–10pm; Sunday 9am–9pm

The Lloyds Pharmacy at St Thomas’ Hospital
t: 020 7188 7642
Monday to Saturday, 7am–10pm; Sunday, 9am–7pm

If you have any further questions or concerns about minoxidil lotion, please contact your doctor. Alternatively, you can contact our Pharmacy Medicines Helpline (details below).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust’s services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:
t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’  t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s  e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.
t: 020 7188 8815  fax: 020 7188 5953

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 111

NHS Choices
Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.
w: www.nhs.uk

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future
Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:
t: 0848 143 4017  e: members@gstt.nhs.uk  w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk